



The State of the City Address

As presented by Mayor James Bernard

on Tuesday, September 19th, 2006

I would like to begin by thanking the Rotary Club of Milwaukie for providing me with the opportunity to speak with you today. I'm honored to appear on behalf of my fellow Councilors and Milwaukie's citizens.

This is my fifth time addressing you all with the purpose of reporting the State of our City.

Looking back on my previous speeches I noticed I took a lot of time talking about what was GOING to happen in our City - or what we NEEDED to accomplish in upcoming years.

I talked about a Milwaukie that hoped for a revitalized Downtown and an underutilized Riverfront that needed care and attention. I talked about the need to bring new businesses to Milwaukie and the need to retain the ones that were already here. We discussed building safer streets for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, and about creating green spaces for our Neighborhoods. I talked about the need for the

community to pull together to make these kinds of things happen in our Milwaukie.

Well, if you got here by driving on the new McLoughlin Boulevard, or came over on Main Street past the North Main Village, or even took King Road to get down here, you can plainly see we're beyond talking about what's to come here in Milwaukie. It's happening. It's happening right now.

Evidence is all around us that the state of our City is strong, and this afternoon I want to talk with you about the kinds of things that are building the momentum we need to help us continue our efforts to build a better Milwaukie.

The first project I want to talk about is the McLoughlin Boulevard Improvement Project, and I want to start off with this one because it has changed the way a lot of people who live in and who pass through our City think about Milwaukie.

Improvements to McLoughlin Boulevard were first proposed in 1991. The original plans were simply to overlay the existing right of way, but we had a different idea. We wanted to create a sense of place, to let people know they were in Milwaukie. I think we've done that, and because of all the newly planted shrubs and trees alongside the road, the ornamental crosswalks and old-fashioned streetlights, people are more inclined to pull into our Downtown to see what's going on.

And because those old dingy buildings are gone on the west side, people are seeing Milwaukie's most cherished asset with brand new eyes. For the first time in decades people traveling along McLoughlin can view the Willamette River and Elk Rock Island, and maybe for the first time, recognize that Milwaukie has some of the best views of the Willamette in the entire region.

The central purpose of the project was to reconnect Milwaukie's Downtown with its Riverfront – a key component of the city's Downtown and Riverfront Land Use Plan adopted in 2000. As I'm sure all of you know and have experienced, McLoughlin was a real

barrier between our Downtown and our Riverfront. Crossing the four-lane highway was uninviting. Many never even tried because they felt it was too dangerous. But now, with a new network of sidewalks and those eye-grabbing crosswalks, pedestrians and cyclists are invited to cross the boulevard and visit our spectacular riverfront.

We secured \$3.6 million in federal and state funds and provided a \$400,000 match to make the McLoughlin Boulevard Project happen, and I'm proud to report that this project was completed ahead of schedule and on-budget. It took a lot of hard work and collaboration with public agencies and private contractors, and together we've constructed an incredible project.

The McLoughlin project is impressive and important to our City's future, and so is the North Main Project, but for different reasons.

Our Downtown has been dormant for decades. The Sunday Farmer's Market has brought new life and has been incredibly successful, but that's once a week and only during the summer and fall months. The

North Main Village will bring people to LIVE in our Downtown. The Village will bring new shops to the Downtown. And because the condos and the apartments and the townhouses have sold so successfully, our Downtown is proving that it's a great place to invest. All told, this \$14 million mixed use commercial/residential facility will add 97 housing units and create 8,150 square feet of retail space.

We needed just one project to get started, one person to give us a chance. I thank Tom Kemper for being that person, and I believe that project will create momentum that will carry our Downtown to places it hasn't been for more than 30 or 40 years.

I think the Texaco property is a product of North Main's momentum. In the fall of 2005 Metro completed the purchase of the old Olsen Brothers Texaco site. The City will team with Metro by combining the City-owned parking lot to the east of the Texaco site to create an entire city block ready for redevelopment. This project will be every bit as exciting as the Village project has been. It will be right on

McLoughlin Boulevard, and it's going to have amazing views of the Willamette River. Because we want to get this right, and because we want to make sure it fits with the vision our citizens have for our Downtown, Milwaukie and Metro have appointed a nine-member citizen advisory committee to put together a set of guidelines that will be used to evaluate developers' proposals. This work will get underway shortly, and we'll be holding a number of open houses to make sure our citizens have a chance to weigh in. We hope to break ground on this project by the fall of 2007.

With the north end of the Downtown established with these projects, City Council made a giant step in shoring up the south end when it purchased the Cash Spot property at the corner of McLoughlin Boulevard and Washington Street this past July. With this property in the City's control, we will determine what kind of development will be built there.

There are a lot of good ideas for the property. It's right across from Kellogg Lake, Kronberg Park and the future Milwaukie Riverfront

Park. People are suggesting parking on the lower levels, with retail and housing on the upper levels. We're not sure what will happen there, but whatever does happen, we'll have the say to make sure it's the right use and is of the right quality for the future of our redeveloping Downtown.

North Main Village, the Texaco site, and the Cash Spot acquisition represent a certain kind of investment. I'd like to take a moment to talk with you about a different kind of investment. Several of our Neighborhoods have come to identify areas within their boundaries where they wanted to build a park. In the Island Station Neighborhood it's Spring Park. In Hector Campbell it's Homewood Park, and in the Lewelling Neighborhood, it's Lewelling Community Park. In all cases, it was the residents who supplied the energy and dedication to provide their neighbors a park. Here are recent pictures of Lewelling Park. This property used to be the site of a drug house. Over the past X years, by raising money through rummage sales and applying for state grants, people like Art Ball, Jeff Klein, and the late Jean Michel, the park is becoming a reality.

I wanted to show you all this because I think it's evidence of the kind of spirit we have here in Milwaukie. We have residents who will put in the hard work and have the kind of determination it takes to build a better Milwaukie, and we're lucky to have them.

I've mentioned the future development of Milwaukie Riverfront Park a couple times now. Let me tell you more about it. Our citizen-based Riverfront Board did a fantastic job working together in order to come up with a plan that is supported by those who want the area to remain available for boaters and by those who want to see more green space – not an easy task, but they did it, and they're to be commended. Here you can see the concept plan Council adopted in May.

This plan is a product of more than five years of hard work and a lot of citizen input. Last year we sent surveys to every address in the City asking what they wanted to see at this location because we believe this area is such an incredibly important asset. We got a lot of

great feedback, and the Riverfront Board did a fantastic job of incorporating it into their recommendation. In early August the City issued a Request For Proposals for a final design for Milwaukie Riverfront Park. With a final design in hand, we'll be eligible for a variety of state funding programs, and we'll start the hard work of finding funding for our park. With the McLoughlin Project completed, you can feel what's in store for our Riverfront. In just a few short years, we will have one of the greatest parks on the Willamette in the entire region.

What's amazing, and really exciting to me, is that I've been talking for a while now and I've really only scratched the surface. I haven't talked about the City's purchase of the house across the pond from our Ledding Library that's being worked on right now to provide space for our growing Library.

I haven't talked about the Gramor Project across from the Milwaukie Marketplace that will bring us a new Walgreen's and 2 other commercial buildings that will bring a combined 9,000 square feet of

new retail space. Dramatic street/traffic improvements on Oak Street will result from this project. The intersection of Oak Street and Highway 224 will be expanded to accommodate six lanes of traffic, with dedicated left and right turns to Highway 224 and a dedicated left turn lane when headed west on Oak. New sidewalks along Oak and Myrtle Streets will also be constructed as part of the project.

And then there's the Springwater Trail-Three Bridges Project. This project connects the Springwater Corridor bike and pedestrian trail with downtown Portland and will be completed in just a matter of months. The \$4.7 million cost of the project was 90% federal, with the remaining ten percent coming from Portland Parks and Recreation, the Portland Office of Transportation, TriMet and the City of Milwaukie. This project brought us the McLoughlin Bridge, that offers a much more appealing entrance into our City than what's currently there.

In the beginning of August Safeway picked up its building permits and work is expected to begin on the new Safeway Grocery Store

and gas station at the corner of King Road and 32nd this month with a projected opening of early spring of next year.

We're rolling right now, and we want to sustain this momentum. As in business, doing so oftentimes requires making intelligent investments to promote future growth. City Council will be looking to do just that in the beginning of next year when City staff presents us with a street funding package that will ask Milwaukie residents and businesses to contribute to the City's street fund to finance a program that will fix our City's streets. Many of you have may have heard staff's presentation back in June, so I won't rehash it here. But to be clear, the City's roads are falling apart, and if we keep funding where it's at, they will continue to do so, and the cost to repair them will skyrocket. As I've outlined here today, Milwaukie is making some incredible changes, and we need the infrastructure to support the kinds of growth the projects I have described will bring.

Before staff makes its recommendation in December, they'll be going out to the community in order to figure out what the community will

support. Learning what the business community will support is crucial. We've seen the County's efforts go down in flames because it didn't have the necessary buy-in from the businesses community. We don't want to suffer the same defeat. We've invested too much time and there's too much at stake to fail, so I ask that you engage us and let us know what you think so we can get something done for our City's streets.

That state of our City is strong. But as I've described to you today, its only getting stronger. These are exciting times in Milwaukie – certainly as exciting as they've been in recent memory. There are great opportunities ahead and more than ever we'll have to keep in mind the kind of community we want to create. People are drawn to Milwaukie's small-town feel. We are protective of that, and we need to hold on to that. At the same time, we want to move forward and improve and enjoy some of the successes we're seeing around us. We will do this, and we will do it with the help of our citizens and business community.

Thank you.